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## J. LOUIS DAVID.



Art is an idea, an abstraction. At all events it is so in the sense that every man has his own conception about it, each man his own peculiar notions. In addition to this, notions have their separate theories: one notion is positive, another imitative, another poetical, another classical, while all have their oddities and fancies. We, perhaps, more than any other country, have set at naught mere schools and academies, and allowed each individual man to work out his own individuality. There are attempts at schools, it is true; but it must be said, they are not successful. The very many painters in England who have kept apart from schools, are really those who have held the highest position.

Truly Art has avowed many theories relative, in most cases, to schools; but the greatest expressions of genius which belong to art are those of single men, who, like John Martin, have worked out their own conception apart from academies, theories, and schools. But if, to a certain extent, this be true of England, it is scarcely true elsewhere, and is not true even in the case of David, whose greatest glory is to have founded a school, which has gone on copying and imitating ever since. Before we judge the school, then, let us inquire into the history of the artist.

This great historical painter came in time to save the French school from utter extinction. Since those days when the fascinating and licentious Watteau had left the slips of the opera covered and concealed by rouge and vermillion, Art in France had fallen into a kind of voluptuous intoxication, a faint and vapid imitation of this castaway amid the pupils of Rubens. Despite the solemn absurdities of Lemoine, who was so serious in his part of a painter as to fall on his sword and die, French Art was at the lowest ebb—a mere type of universal debauchery, the emanations of sensualism, and the dreams of bestiality. There was not a shred, not a remnant of decency or delicacy left. The alcove, which the Flemish school concealed in their studios, or hid away in the corner of a picture, shaded and modestly veiled, was now the subject-

matter of all French productions, the artists of that country seeking to outdo each other in their endeavours to pervert and degenerate the human intellect.

Art, literature, morals, manners, all were sinking into the same vortex under the baneful influence of such courts as those of Louis XV. and the Regent of Orleans, the members of which were on a par with, if not below, the average of the populations which fill our bridewells and our Magdalen hospitals. Casual observers have often been surprised when gazing at pictures like those which adorned the walls of ladies' chambers under the Regent, have been naturally horrified at the violence and brutality of the people at the commencement of the Revolution, and have condemned artists and people as they had previously condemned writers and philosophers. But the true criminals must be sought elsewhere. The tone of public morals, the stamp of public character, in times like the last century in France, must be taken from above. The court, the aristocracy, the church, the women of rank, were all equally corrupt, equally profligate, equally vile and contemptible. It would have been difficult to find at Versailles or at the Tuileries men and women capable of loving a Milton or a Dante, of admiring a Michael Angelo or a Raffaele, of understanding or appreciating a high-class production of any kind; and Voltaire, Piron, Boucher, Watteau, and the novel of Faublas, were the fitting children of such a soil as that which educated and fashionable society presented at this period. Poets, painters, authors, philosophers, historians, in France especially, must be read and admired; and as to be read and admired it was necessary to be cynical, irreligious, and indelicate, poets, painters, authors, philosophers, and historians were cynical, irreligious, and indelicate.

It is an error to suppose that intellect forms the character of the age; it is the characteristics of the age which form the intellect. It will be noted by all careful observers, that as society has become refined, so has literature softened down and been purified; and this is the more evident when we

remark, that literature is generally a little more loose and bolder than the language of the most refined society in a civilised country.

In France, in the time of Watteau, the very name of love had been degraded and materialised. We no longer saw fond affection beaming from an averted face, a languid eye, an expressive smile, love timidly venturing on a stolen kiss; all was bold, audacious, unblushing, and daringly painted on the wainscoting of boudoirs, the interior of ladies' bed-chambers; a style of dress somewhat too *négligée*; or ideas, unfit for pencil or brush, crudely and coarsely expressed. Scenes of country life no longer breathed innocence and purity; they were excuses for rough and dubious scenes; while even landscape was degraded into the representation of a nature stiff and impossible—a nature reminding one of the painted scenes of a ballet, and not of the reality. The imitators and followers of Watteau had none of his talent, none of his soft and lovely skies, none of his truth and power of colouring.

Art was then, like society, religion, virtue, morals, and even national existence, about to perish at the end of an orgy and debauch fit for the purlieus of some demoralised capital. Never did a nation present a more degraded or melancholy spectacle than did France towards the latter end of the last century; without faith, honour, or even the last semblance of virtue—its best outward sign—modesty. To save Art, a revolution, a change as radical and as sweeping as that which was about to save the body politic, was needed. This mighty and tremendous change was effected by David—not wholly, not completely; for French Art has never yet risen to the very highest level, never soared to those tremendous heights which dazzled the minds and fired the genius of Rome, of Florence, of Venice—but effected to an extent which is fortunate for France. Not that the voluptuous, even the painfully indelicate, style of art has been wholly discarded in France; by no means. The students of this disagreeable branch of painting still exist, as do the imitators of the *abbés* and *petit-maitres*. They must and will remain while France is France. But a more severe, a more chaste, a higher tone has been given; and the men of talent and genius who attain to eminence in France, discarding the *boudoir* and *ruelle*, have elevated their thoughts above the palled copyists of Boucher and Watteau, and obtained a deservedly high place in the art-history of modern Europe.

Several attempts had been made, previously to the day of David, to turn the foul current into a pure and wholesome channel. But only another Hercules could cleanse the Augean stable. Vien made one or two timid attempts to check the torrent, but was swept away in the mud which he stirred to the surface. A more vast and capacious mind, a more daring and original genius, was required to effect a real, a radical cure—one who would boldly grapple with the tide and hurl it back under the influence of the beautiful, and of the beautiful as accepted by the great verdict of antiquity. It was a mighty stride to take, from the effeminate Boucher, who showed you how to treat a leg elegantly, or made a cripple look graceful, to the painter David, who was to profess the worship of the beautiful with all the severity of a Florentine.

It is the mistake of France to rush to extremes. She is eternally either turning liberty into licence, or groaning beneath the heavy load of despotism. In the same way in art. From a romp in the hay-field, she turns to the rape of the Sabines, and that art which was familiar, funny, coarsely humorous, is now nothing if not classical. A man christened his son Brutus, and was painted in a toga. It may have been necessary to excite this enthusiasm for Rome and Greece at the time; but the dull monotony of classical subjects, as depicted by artists, would soon have wearied the world if Scripture and modern history had not furnished the artist with fresh materials to work upon.

Singularly enough, the man who was to commence the revolution against the immodest Boucher was his own relation. The last of the corrupters of painting in France, he who closed the long procession of the carnival of materialism

in France, sent forth from his own family the regenerator of his art. The nephew of François Boucher was Louis David.

Born in France in the middle of the eighteenth century, in 1748, David was educated at the *Collège des Quatre Nations*. He derived little advantage from the education he there received, already influenced as he was by the desire of painting. His copy-books were covered with rough and shapeless sketches, and when he should have been writing a speech of Scipio or of Hannibal, the young rhetorician preferred painting one of them with a Roman helmet. His father, who was a mercer on the Quai of the Megisserie, having been unfortunately killed in a duel, David fell, at the age of nine years, under the tutorship of a maternal uncle, who wished to educate him as an architect, believing him to be possessed of a solid and reasoning mind. But the young student, while possessed of much calm good sense, had a fiery and ardent disposition. He rebelled against the authority of his tutor, by whom he did not feel himself to be appreciated.

One day he was sent by his mother with a letter to his great-uncle, Boucher. He found the artist engaged in painting one of those voluptuous pieces he was in the habit of supplying to Madame Dubarry—pieces which were not without originality and talent. The sight of the easel, the palette, and the brushes inflamed the imagination of young David, who, while Boucher was reading the letter, remained in silent amazement before the picture, no doubt mentally revolving, like Correggio, his own career.

He resolved to become a great painter.

His friends were compelled to yield to so energetic a will, and David became a pupil of Boucher, as Guérin was the teacher of Géricault. But Boucher, despite his weakness in yielding to an immoral and degrading style for the sake of momentary triumphs, had a conscientious mind and much greatness of soul on occasions. In those days he hesitated not to corrupt still more the vicious strata of society; but he at once acknowledged that his lessons might be pernicious and injurious to David, and he advised him to go to Vien, who would give him more wholesome instruction. In 1772 the pupil of Vien wished to try for the "prize of Rome." His genius was, however, in an anomalous state, and his judges were the men of the school he was about to overthrow. He tried twice, and twice failed.

David suffered all the usual difficulties of a young man beginning life in any profession, when without rich friends. He often wanted the means of devoting himself peaceably to study, and the gnawing cares of want were added to what he considered injustice. His sufferings were, however, not of very long duration, and he was delivered from his misery in a very unexpected way. David was saved and started by an opera *danseuse*. The celebrated Mademoiselle Guimard, whom Paris adored, and who was surrounded by a court of scamps, the friends of the Prince de Soubise, her ruined lover, had just built in the Chaussée d'Antin, under the name of Temple of Terpsichore, a "delicious hotel," where the *petit souper* was regarded as one of the objects of man's existence. To embellish her dwelling, the renowned courtesan addressed herself to Fragonard, a charming painter, a painter especially of love and love-scenes, wholly, says a French writer, *without prejudices*! A quarrel took place shortly, however, between Guimard and her decorator. The latter had painted his fair employer as Terpsichore, but returning secretly to the *salon*, with brushes and paint, he re-touched the head, and made of her a furious and raving Nemesis. The *danseuse* came into the room, where, seeing herself disfigured in this way, she flew into a passion, and overwhelmed the artist with reproaches and insults. She called in her friends to show them the horrible head, forgetting that in her rage she was assimilating herself to the caricature. Everybody began to laugh. Fragonard, avenged, abandoned the decoration of the hotel, which was then handed over to David. One day, the young man appeared pensive, and sighed profoundly as he thought. Mademoiselle Guimard overheard him, and asked the cause of his *ennui*. David confessed his want of money to pay his models, and to wait at leisure the chance of a coming trial.

The good-natured opera-dancer—she who had so much money, so easily obtained—brought him all the money he wanted.

David was a true Frenchman. He took the money, and took heart at the same time, finished the decorations, and began to work hard again for his third trial. A third time he was rejected. He gave way to utter despair, and, shut up in his room, determined to allow himself to die of hunger, another victim to the eccentric faintness of heart so often felt by men of genius. He was living in the Louvre, in the apartments of Sedaine, a clever poet, who loved him as a son. This worthy man, uneasy at not seeing David, went and knocked at his door. He obtained no answer, and, in a state of great alarm, rushed to the house of Doyen, and induced him to come also. They both began knocking and imploring, and finally induced him to open. On recognising the voice of Doyen, who alone, of all the members of the Academy, had been favourable to him, David had dragged himself to the door, pale, thin, half-dead. Restored by his friends to life and hope, he presented himself a fourth time, and, in 1775, carried off the great prize.

Natoire, who had been director of the school at Rome, died this same year, and Vien was selected to take his place. The master and pupil then started together for Rome, and enjoyed, during the journey through Italy, one long draught of admiration. David, on arriving at the Vatican, wandered with delight and surprise through those halls filled with masterpieces, elevated even more by history and antiquity than by intrinsic merit. He began immediately to draw bas-reliefs, to copy antique statues and the Italian masters, choosing always the most pure. At once a resolution began to prepare itself in his mind, still affected, however, by the recollections of his country, by the first impressions received; and seeing in Valentine the genius of his nation, he executed a copy of the "Last Supper" of that vigorous French master. Thus floating and uncertain between his reminiscences and the imposing models which he had under his eyes, he painted a picture of the "Plague," which is in the Lazaretto at Marseilles, and in which will be found something of the old manner of the eighteenth century, with an evident leaning to originality and reform. The old painter, Pompey Battoni, said of one figure of a man struck by plague, who occupies the front of the picture, that it was worthy of Michael Angelo.

A great movement was taking place at Rome, a movement which was destined to carry David with it. Canova was meditating the reform of statuary, Raphael Mengs was restoring a solemn and earnest tone to art-criticism, and endeavouring to revivify in his own paintings the examples of Raphael d'Urbino, so long neglected. About the same time the learned Winckelman published his "History of Art," in which he reproduced the principles of the Greeks, indicating the most delicate beauties of their art with all the passion of an antiquary. The moment then had commenced, and a revolution was to emanate from these efforts, such as Diderot foresaw, and which was to be contemporaneous with that in the body politic. When David returned to Paris in 1780, he was already completely transformed, in the sense, at least, that he had made up his mind to cease taking his subjects from real life, and to choose them from the antique, or from a nature suited to a noble and energetic style.

It was when influenced by these new ideas that he composed his "Belisarius," of which we offer an engraving (p. 340), and which was the last instance of his indecision, the line of demarcation between the past and the new school which he himself was about to create. As for the execution, in the original it has all the breadth which should be found in an historical picture; the drapery is not copied with any of that smallness which is found in the copy in the Louvre. "But," says a French writer, "the emotion fails, because the artist is not moved, and though he has written on the stone the simple words, *Date obolum Belisario*. Vandyck had already treated this fine subject. Some amateurs recollected this, and hastened to place the picture alongside of the engraving. The soldier was much admired, who, in the attitude of

astonishment, contemplates his general reduced to beg, and seems to say, 'Is that Belisarius?' The intention of the Flemish painter was so striking, above all in the movement of the arms of the warrior, that if his head had been covered up, his arms would have expressed astonishment. It was felt, on the contrary, that David had given to the soldier, on whose action all depended, as forced a gesture as that of Vandyck was natural and expressive. Nevertheless the multitude were delighted, and carried David in triumph round his picture."

The story doubtless assisted the success of the picture. It is one of the many in Roman history which strikes the imagination forcibly.

Whole books have been written to tell the tale of the blind old general, who went forth into the world to beg his way, after commanding some of the finest armies in the world. We only allude to it, in addition to describing the picture, because it is a really good subject, one which will bear trying again, and which we recommend to the young artist as a pleasing experiment. The story of Belisarius is simply this, setting aside all the romance of Marmontel:—

He was a favourite general of one of the emperors of Constantinople, and was sent forth at the head of large armies to resist the barbarians. He was successful, and gained great glory, but met with the usual reward of men who trust in princes. Having done his duty, he was cast aside, then forgotten, and suddenly re-appeared, recognised by a soldier who had served under him, begging, with his child in his arms to guide him as he went.

The renown of David was spreading. From all sides came ardent young men, who insisted upon having him for a master; and he was pressed to open that school which afterwards became so celebrated. A lodging in the Louvre was allowed him; the Academy received him unanimously; Louis XVI. named him painter to the king; and fortune, as if never weary of her favours, came to meet him with the hand of a richly dowered young girl, Mademoiselle Pecoul, whose father was an architect and builder to the king.

In 1784, the King of France having desired of his first painter "The Oath of the Horatii," David determined to go and paint the heroic Romans in Rome itself. He accordingly started on a second journey to that capital, and there painted his picture, which was rapturously received by the Italians. Nothing was talked of but the Horatii and the French painter. The cardinals wished to see the "rare animal," as David himself expresses himself in a familiar letter to the Marquis of Bierre. But when "The Oath of the Horatii" was received in Paris, the intendant of the king's household, M. d'Angivilliers, affected to speak of it with disdain. He was one of those men of routine who were frightened at the new school. He could not bear the Borghese Gladiator, and objected to "that thing" being given to pupils as a model. His first care was to take a compass to measure the painter's canvas; and as he found it to be thirteen feet instead of ten, he was quite alarmed, and complained that an artist should have been audacious enough to pass the dimensions assigned to a picture. He was punished, at a later period, by the rough remark of David: "Well, then, if it really is too big, take a pair of scissors and cut it."

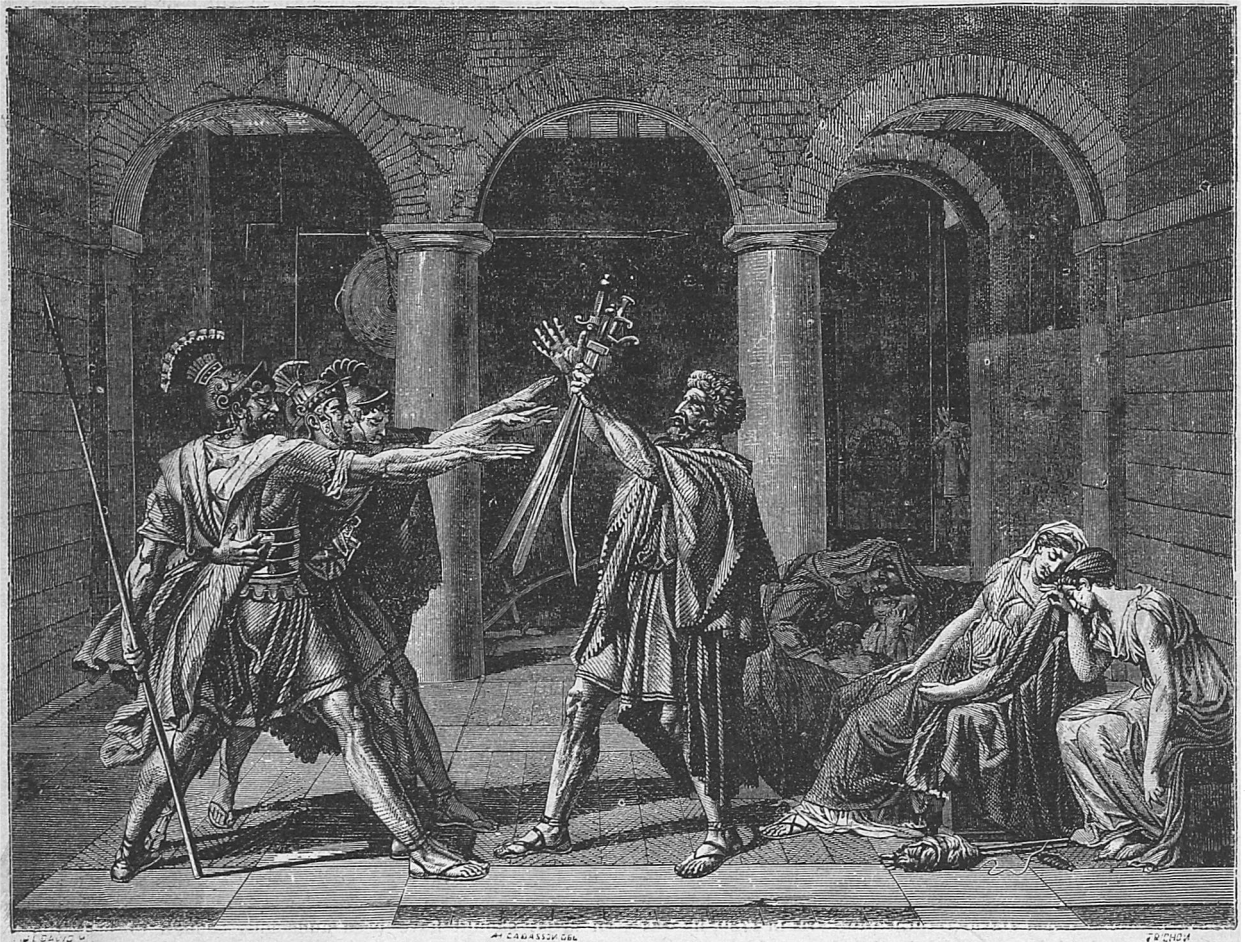
"The Oath of the Horatii" (p. 332), to be correctly judged, must be connected with the period at which it was painted. When we recollect the soft and languid compositions of the contemporaries of David, and how insipid was that continual representation of Sybarites, without even the old peculiarity of a fixed style, one is surprised to see these masculine figures arise, and to have represented to us a Roman interior reconstructed on archaeological principles so well suited to the great drama, the sublimity of which was no longer understood. The stupefaction of the world must have been great indeed when they saw an artist, at the same time that he evoked one of the most striking episodes of ancient history, restore the costume, the manners, the architecture of the heroic times, choose a simple background, and find so admirable a movement of enthusiasm in these warriors animated by the genius of Rome, and such

marked masculine and real faces. We pass, as it were, from the insipid nonentities of Dorat, to the sublimity of Shakespeare or the heroic verse of Milton. This serious model, this severe expression of reality, this firm position of the feet and hands, which is to be seen in every fibre, may appear exaggerated now, as doubtless it is, when we more thoroughly understand what an historical picture should be. But what a contrast, at a time when nothing was seen but soft carnations, indecent subjects, pretentious or disgusting pencils!

Seroux d'Agincourt, the illustrious author of a continuation of Winckelman's work, accuses David of having committed an historical heresy in certain parts of the picture. The author, however, defended himself on solid ground; he had profoundly studied all that was connected with his subject. He knew Plutarch by heart. He was very fond of the Latin classics,

thology or history. Talma must yield to David the chief part of the honour of having brought about this transformation in scenic costume; for it was in the society of David that the celebrated comedian learnt to love the antique, and to see the extreme absurdity of Nero appearing in red-heeled shoes and gartered breeches, Venus in a hoop and powder, Jupiter in a wig, and Cupid in the costume of a *débardeur*. It was David who cast the Roman toga on the shoulders of Brutus, as represented by Talma, who appeared suddenly in the costume of the hour, to the great astonishment of the French public, and to the great disgust of the old stagers.

An anecdote of David will characterise his stiffness and hardness of character, and illustrate the heathen time in which he lived, better than the most lengthened statements. It is an



THE OATH OF THE HORATII.—FROM A PAINTING BY DAVID.

especially Livy. He is in general, therefore, exceedingly correct in all that requires historical knowledge, in manners, customs, scenery, &c. At the time, his taste was so highly rated, that everybody began to model their furniture and dress upon his ideas. It was immediately after the public exhibition of "The Oath of the Horatii" that antique ornaments came into fashion. This illustrates completely the character of the French, fickle and impulsive to the last degree. Everybody was led to have the furniture of Tarquin the Proud, to drink in the patera of Herculaneum, to light themselves by the lamps of the Villa Albani. The ladies' dresses were cut in imitation of the chlamys, while their shoes were exchanged for cothurni. Statues, medals, and Etruscan vases dislodged the furniture of past times, and for the first time the characters in tragedy were clothed according to the traditions of my-

anecdote that could be true only of a Frenchman. Madame de Noailles asked of David a "Christ," which the painter refused to execute, because he never painted religious subjects, they not inspiring him in the slightest degree. This might have been true of the ridiculous representations of saints and nuns, which adorned chapels and oratories; but it is incomprehensible how any man of genius could fail to be inspired by the history of Christ himself. David at all events, Frenchman as he was, would not, or could not be inspired. But as the Marechale de Noailles insisted, David painted a "Christ" for her, with the features of a handsome soldier in the Gardes Françaises. He often declared that the Scriptures spoke not to his heart; and one of his great reasons for regarding Raffaele as so far above all other painters was, that he could be inspired by subjects which left him utterly and hopelessly



indifferent! Here speaks the countryman of Piron, of Voltaire, and others, who, with all their genius, have done so little for poor humanity. But we must take David as we find him—incomplete, weak in many things, but powerful even in his defects and errors. His was an essentially pagan genius; his god was Socrates, his religion love of country, liberty his worship. His heroes were Brutus, Horace, Leonidas; and, if he could not feel the soft and ennobling and vivifying poetry of Christianity, or understand the consequent superiority of modern society, he was at all events a worthy pupil of the Grecian statuary and of the philosophers of the portico. His outlines are always classical; his arrangements are guided by good taste; while the attitude of his tranquil figures is that which we should expect to find on the walls of an Athenian temple. He wanted but to feel the elevating

"Cato went to meet death, and Socrates waited for it to come to him." David had painted him holding a cup, which the slave in tears had offered to him. "No! no!" said André Chenier, "Socrates will not seize it until he has finished speaking." The scene and the contrasts are indeed remarkable. The executioner is much more moved than the victim. Around the master are grouped all his disciples, their minds divided between grief and admiration. The younger ones are striking their heads against the walls of the prison, and are giving other signs of despair. Crito is deeply attentive to his last words. Plato sits at the end of the bed, wrapped in his cloak, his head bowed, meditating on the last speech he is listening to; he does not dare to look at Socrates, as if the serenity of the master shamed his grief. In the background you see a dark staircase, by which the family of the philosopher is



L. DAVID, PINX.

M. CABASSON, D.

BREVIERE, S.

THE SABINES.—FROM A PAINTING BY DAVID.

spirituality of Christianity to have been an immortal painter.

Since the Renaissance, there never was a painter capable of conceiving and executing the death of Socrates better than David (p. 341). Socrates is speaking with his friends on the immortality of the soul, when the servitor of the Eleven comes to bring him the cup of hemlock, turning away his eyes and weeping at his task. The philosopher is about to take the cup of poison with his right hand without looking, as a man who, wholly absorbed by a serious conversation, declines to interrupt it by noticing any ordinary event. His left hand, one finger of which is raised to heaven, points out clearly the subject of his discourse, and his way of taking the cup indicates sufficiently the calm and quiescence of his mind. A French poet, speaking of death, alludes to the celebrated dying scenes of antiquity, and says:—

"Caton se la donna . . . Socrate l'attendit."

being taken away—that family which has just said a last adieu to him. A critic has remarked: "It is a great pity that David did not devote to the execution of this masterpiece the ideality which should be in harmony with the subject. Poussin had himself established and applied that law of propriety which makes the artist choose on the palette tones in conformity to the character of the thought which is to be translated. He would have treated the death of Socrates in a Doric way, as being the most severe. He would have wielded his brush with breadth, have affected sober colours, avoiding pleasing in order to move. David, on the contrary, having devoted himself with too much complaisance to his best work, has fallen into a too finished, over-careful, and fastidious style; so that it is much better to see his picture as represented in the engraving, if we wish to admire it without reserve and see it in its true light,—that is, the finest composition of all schools of painting."

"The Death of Socrates," which the critic thus speaks of, is not certainly "the best composition in any school of painting;" it owes much to the subject itself, which is the most marked fact perhaps in the whole of Athenian history, as Socrates was, without comparison, the greatest man of the pagan world. It is, however, too well known to require description.

David has often committed the same fault which is very surprising in an artist, all of whose works were in every other respect so vigorously treated. His "Brutus," for example, is characterised by a certain affectation in the pencilling, which is out of place in such a subject. The furniture is painted with the care which we might expect in a *Miérís* or a *Gerard Douw*; the details are elaborated in the style of domestic pieces, and contrary to the usual historical style. It is much for a painter, who did not really understand the effect of light and shade, to have thrown a dark shadow over the form of the Roman consul. And, truly, it was right that in the shade should have taken place the struggle between the conscience of the father and the austere duties of the republican citizen—duties which have never been proved to be such as we in our philosophy cannot sympathise with—the man condemning his own offspring to death. There were other magistrates and other citizens besides a father. The head of Brutus certainly could not have been fittingly displayed in the light, while the headless dead bodies of his children are carried away, executed by his command. He is, truly, finely represented, in obscurity turning his back to the gloomy procession, hesitating between his pride at having been ferocious, and his sorrow at not having shown some heart and feeling. The rest of the picture has been generally condemned as cold, formal, improbable, and without moving effect. The daughters of Brutus are generally thought to have fainted too gracefully. Woman's nature, even though that woman be a Roman or a Spartan, is impulsive. A sister gazing at the corpse of a brother, just being brought in from execution, would not have preserved such order, it is thought, in the folds of her garments and in the arrangement of her hair. It has been objected, that the severity of the father is enough without imparting to the women even the semblance of coldness or calculation. The wild despair of the women would indeed have formed an admirable contrast to the restrained emotion of the father, and the artist would have avoided the error of introducing two unities into one action.

The great revolution, which was to burst on the world like a thunder-clap, approached with rapid strides, and David had already completed his. "Brutus" bears the date of 1789, a date big with mighty consequences to the whole world; a date, the deeds of which, terrible as were some of their consequences, saved continental Europe from utter corruption and chased away the leprosy of government, morals, and manners, to return no more. Society had fallen into so vile a mire, the seeds of decay and corruption were sown so deeply, that nothing but the whirlwind and tornado could eradicate them. For a long time all felt an uneasy foreshadowing of tremendous events. The existing form of things was known to be irretrievably bad, and so unmistakeable was the impulse to better things, that the picture of "Brutus" was ordered for that very king, who, the weakest and best of his race, was to suffer for the monstrosities of those who preceded him—monstrosities only known in ancient times, under the reigns of Commodus, Caligula, and Theodorus.

David had been powerfully influenced by that philosophy which sapped the foundations of the past without providing an effective remedy for the future. He determined at once to devote his art to aid the movement of the public mind. At the very opening of the revolutionary scenes he used his brush in its cause. He undertook to paint the "Oath of the Tennis-Court," one of the finest incidents of the Revolution, a protestation against the insanity and violence of despotism. It is a magnificent historical scene admirably rendered, a scene in which one dominant feeling is expressed by a thousand different organisations, and yet, despite the difficulties, the impression is one and the same. What a transport illumines

every face! Here, thousands of arms raised in the air; there, hats waving aloft; there, excited representatives of the people collecting in groups, encouraging and embracing each other; all this strikes the mind as would a clamour of many voices. Upright on a table, and alone, calm amidst the general tempest, the President Bailly pronounces the words of the oath, in an attitude as calm and motionless as that of the law. Never was such another collection of men congregated, and this materially assists the painter. Here is Barnave, here Mirabeau, and away there in the crowd is Robespierre. Each man is moved according to his character. One strikes the ground with his feet and raises his clenched fist; another sitting on a bench timidly holds out his hand. The younger members, standing on chairs, mingle disorder with their enthusiasm. An aged man, dragged forward in an arm-chair, has his arm held up for him while he takes the oath; while others weep, some with rage, some with fear. In the centre foreground is a group composed of a *Chartreux* monk, a Protestant, and a Catholic priest. The Protestant is Rabaut Saint-Etienne, the Carthusian is Dom Gerle, and the priest is the Abbé Gregoire. All difference of opinions have disappeared, all hearts are beating in common, and this one group tells the amity of the assembly. The movement is everywhere,—in the hall, in the air, above and below. A stiff breeze has raised the curtains of the windows, to which are holding on some groups of people, and through which can be seen a thunder-bolt, which falls on the royal chapel. David understood at once, perhaps, how the sombre drama was to end, the prologue of which was occurring in the place devoted to the games of the princes.

On the motion of Barère, the Constitutional Assembly decreed that the "Oath of the Tennis-Court," commenced by David, should be executed at the expense of the public treasury, and placed in the hall where took place the sittings of the assembly. But David did not paint this work. He sketched it out in pencil and bitumen on an immense canvas. Despite the ugly modern costume, so difficult to make picturesque, the learned anatomist determined to lose none of his science. Before clothing his figures with their ample waistcoats, he sketched their broad chests in the most conscientious manner. The figure of the "virtuous Bailly" originally occupied the centre of the group, and was drawn so perfectly in the style of a Greek statue, that beneath his coat the muscles of his arm, the form of his shoulder, and the developments of his torso might easily be seen. In general, clothes are stuck fast on the body, like damp linen—an exaggeration which is preferable to the heavy and wearisome effect which would be produced by a simple imitation of costume on a canvas where it takes up so much place. David remained a Greek, even when he should have been a Frenchman. The love of the naked,—the remembrance, the earnest perception of the antique, made him pursue the human form even under the lace of the Constituants. He had the true stamp of great artists, who are the same in all things, rather inclined to bend their genius to the level of a work, than force the work into collision with their native talent.

This sketch of such great historical value, as powerful and bold as a cartoon of Michael Angelo, was put up to auction seven years ago at a very low price, and the government, which afterwards purchased it, allowed it to be sold to a private individual, with a little finished sketch in pencil by David himself, from which the engraving was taken.

The importance of the picture is best seen from a brief sketch of the scene which it represents—a scene which, followed up in the same united and harmonious way, would have changed the fortunes of Europe.

The meeting of the states-general of France was an event which plunged the whole nation into the wildest state of excitement. For a long time the writings of philosophers and satirists, and political economists, had been preparing the public mind for a change, which was imperatively demanded by the circumstances of the times. France was toppling, ready to fall. The throne had been dragged in the mire by its own occupants, and the efforts of a well-meaning but weak man

could not save it. Individually without the one great vice of his courtiers, his court was still a scene of profligacy and iniquity, such as the pen of an English historian can scarcely write. The nobles were the same vapid, chattering, boasting, debauched set of infidels, who thought it clever and strong-minded to be irreligious, the height of glory to be debauched. The middle classes, though better and more moral, were not more religious, except where protestantism shed its quiet and unobtrusive light upon the home; the people were nothing, wretched, poor, oppressed. There were slaves, serfs of estates, in the days of Louis XVI.—men who belonged to the soil they dwelt on, the property of bishops and chapters.

But the nation was weary of all this. Famine with its grim horrors stalked through the land, scattering disease and death; and it was rumoured and believed that the whole was produced by vast and disgraceful speculations. The forestallers and regraters were pointed out. Men were discovered and hanged for emptying bags of corn into rivers, to produce scarcity. The peasantry never even saw white bread. Agriculture was neglected; the nation was in debt; the whole body politic was rotten, and it became clear that the dissolution of society was near at hand.

Reluctantly, unwillingly, the king summoned his parliament. It was called against the ideas of the court, and undermined and opposed from the very earliest moment. This was one of the chief causes of all the misery that followed. A frank yielding to popular opinion would have saved the court from much. What exasperated the French people and caused the reign of terror, was the emigration *en masse* of the rich and powerful, who, once on the frontier, launched anathemas at the people, and announced their intention of coming back at the head of foreign armies to put down the new ideas. Had the whole aristocracy accepted the revolution and rallied round the king, without listening to the syren voice of the queen, who was the chief cause of all the mischief; had the aristocracy have done this, and surrendered their exclusive privileges quietly, there would have been a limited monarchy, and France might have been gradually prepared for that republic which is the ardent hope of her educated classes.

But the resistance of blind conservatism began at once. The crown and nobility tried from the first to snub and keep down the *tiers-état*, that is, the representatives of the nation; and at last in a fit of vigour, or rather of delusion, respecting its own power, the court closed the doors of the meeting-house against the representatives.

Then occurred the great historical scene which is illustrated in the picture of Louis David. The representatives finding workmen at work, and soldiers guarding, knew very well the meaning of the act. It was an attempt to dissolve them under pretence of adjournment. They knew that if they submitted to the delay, it would be all over with them. Their existence depended on the support of the country, and that support would be gone if they bent to the arbitrary power of the crown. They accordingly determined to meet elsewhere, and the great racket-court of the princes was selected. The representatives poured in in great numbers, and, incited by Mirabeau and others, swore to be faithful to their delegation, and opened the career of revolution by openly opposing the power of the crown, which, by attempting what it could not carry out, lost all force and prestige. The scene of the "Oath of the Tennis-Court" killed the old monarchy. It exhibited it in a ridiculous light. It aimed at ruling by force, it insulted and tried to degrade the representatives of the people, who remained calm, dignified, and did their duty unawed by bayonets, unintimidated by violence.

From that hour the revolution knew its power, the crown began to feel its utter weakness and insignificance, which was made more completely manifest by the rapid emigration of those who had sworn to defend and guard the throne of Charlemagne, which since has been so unceremoniously tossed from Bourbon to Napoleon, from Napoleon to Bourbon, from Bourbon to Orleans, and thence back again to Napoleon.

There are few such scenes of unity in the French Revolution. It augured well; but the augury, like many others, meant nothing. The apple of discord was soon to fall amid that assembly, and bring about terrible, though perhaps natural, results. The year 1793 was the saturnalia of a nation of slaves, bursting without preparation into liberty, which, when not won gradually and by the genuine progress of the human mind, is always licence.

Elected to the Convention by the section of the Museum, in September, '92, David exercised over the assembly the dictatorship of arts. Everything he proposed was instantly decreed. Two French artists, Ruter and Chinard, having been attacked at Rome by the sbirri of the Inquisition and taken to St. Angelo, David was immediately informed of it by a letter from Topino Lebrun, his pupil, and he obtained a decree from the Convention that the ministers should write energetically to the Pope. "He further obtained," says a modern writer, "that the office of director of the Academy of Rome should be suppressed, as he himself says in a letter, the autograph copy of which is before us, and from which oozes forth his hatred of the old institution in brutal and coarse words.

David voted for the death of the king. On the eve of the execution, Lepelletier St. Fargeau having been assassinated in the Palais Royal, David set to work, and two months afterwards he presented to the Convention the picture of the "Last Moments of Lepelletier." The victim of Paris was represented lying on the ground, the torso showing the bleeding wound in the side, relieved by the white linen; a sword, suspended by a thread perpendicularly over the wound, is thrust through a paper on which is written these words—"I vote the death of the tyrant." On this occasion David depicted nature in all its energetic truth with the same brush with which he had before produced the "Last Supper" of Valentine. He was even more true and more expressive in his painting of "Marat Expiring," which is certainly a masterpiece for execution, and in which he has almost idealised the hideous countenance of his hero, the lunatic revolutionist. The assembly accepted the present, and ordered that it should be engraved at the public expense, and that the honour of the Pantheon should be publicly given to Marat. With his head thrown back, and his hand outside the bath, Marat holds out a scroll, on which this is written—"Give an assignat to the mother of seven children whose husband has died for his country."

Marat's body was, a few months later, cast by a mob into the common sewer.

The part which David played in the Convention had its brilliant side; the chief direction of the fine arts, the command of all patriotic festivals, his solicitude for the laureate, to whom he had a pension of about £100 per annum voted for the five years they were to pass in perfecting themselves either in Italy or in the territory of the republic, were all proofs of his love of art. It was David who made to the assembly that famous report, which began, "A statue shall be erected to the people; victory will supply the bronze." At last, on the 19th Prairial, after Robespierre's speech on the "Immortality of the Soul," David developed his plan of the "Festival of the Supreme Being." There were to be choirs of young girls and boys in imitation of the ancient Panathenæa. Paris awoke to the sound of music on a vast scale. The altar of the country, placed on the summit of a mountain, was to be the front of an immense procession, in which the members of the Convention figured, with bunches of flowers and fruits in their hands. Dances, decorations, burning piles, thousand-coloured illuminations, gave to this *fête* unprecedented splendour and grandeur without a parallel; but it was one of those enormous pieces of showy clap-trap possible only in France. It was very nearly the death-warrant of all who conceived it. Compromised among the conquered of Thermidor, David's arrest was ordered. He was detained in the Luxembourg five months, then set free, and then arrested again. Supported in the Convention by Thibeaudeau, Chenier, Merlin de Douai, and Boissy d'Anglas, who had experienced his worth in



private life, he at last regained his liberty. Then it was that he painted the picture of "The Sabines," which is engraved in our pages (p. 333). The idea of this picture came to him, it is said, in somewhat of a romantic manner. While yet a captive, David learnt that his wife, though parted from him for some time, did her utmost to save him, and even confronted danger for his sake. Touched with this devotion, he resolved to paint her; but after some reflection he came to the conclusion that he, David, the legislator of painting, should wrap his allusions under a general and historical idea. The story of the Sabines came to his thoughts.

the lives of thousands of warriors were spared by the heroism of the women.

"If the picture of 'The Sabines,'" says a critic, who, though partial to Louis David, is sometimes severe, "were to be critically examined as a masterpiece, and the work of the chief of a school, we should have to protest against much of its immense reputation; for it has neither movement, nor *chiaroscuro*, nor comprehension of that skill which is displayed in the grouping of many figures. Besides, these are not the robust ancestors of the reapers of Leopold Robert. We can scarcely reconcile to our minds how it happens that such a delicate,



POPE PIUS VII.—FROM A PAINTING BY DAVID.

The story is familiar to all readers of history. The Romans having established themselves upon their rocky fortress, and being without wives, made an inroad upon their neighbours, the Sabines, and carried away their younger and more beautiful women. The Sabines, after preparations which consumed some time, came out to revenge the outrage. The Romans armed to resist their enemies, and a terrific combat had commenced, when the women, who had husbands and children on one side and fathers and brothers on the other, rushed in, placed themselves between the combatants, and stayed the contest. A treaty of amity and peace then took place, and

elegant, and perfumed warrior as Romulus should have come forth from those Roman walls, whose heavy, massive constructions, starting from the Tarpeian rock, are seen in the distance. We wonder how it can be that this well-fed hero, with such delicate flesh, rubbed doubtless with aromatic oils, so gracious, so clean, so well combed, should be the nursling of the she-wolf, the founder of that savage colony of brigands who were destined in their savage ardour to conquer the world. It is hard to think that that gentlemanly delicate hand slew Remus. Poussin is more true, more historical. The heroes of David are gladiators, who stand to be admired before an

assembled people, who are ready to die or kill elegantly. The personages of Poussin's paintings are coarse, barbarous, primitive; they move about naturally, if not nobly. It is a rough and vigorous scuffle, in which people tear each other's hair, and in which men snatch from each other superb women,

the old woman who shows that she has nurtured Romans, and the mother holding up her child aloft before the armies. The armour-bearers are very fine in form, but too much in the style of the statues of the time of Hadrian; they are figures which do not move—which could not move."



NAPOLEON CROSSING MOUNT ST. BERNARD.—FROM A PAINTING BY DAVID.

who are handsome without seeking to show it; while the Sabines of David are scented with musk, pretty, and coquettish, and elegant, even in the disorder of their hair. Their gestures are theatrical, their position full of affectation. And yet in many of the figures we find the great master-hand: *e. g.*, that of the old warrior who is sheathing his sword, of

The same critic, having exhausted his blame, turns to the other side of the picture:—"Everything, however, must be said. If the picture of 'The Sabines' is not a real masterpiece for three reasons—because the pantomime is improbable, in not being treated according to the proper fashion, and because the light is without play, and the composition without true

optics—we must own that the figures, considered separately, are admirably modelled. The Romulus, the centre figure, is an Apollo with a helmet, a javelin, and a golden buckler; it is a figure of the finest time of youth; all is simple, pure, and clothed in a soft skin, with a wavy and gentle outline; while the whole reveals the serenity of the demigod. The figure of Tattius, more masculine and robust, and belonging to a less elevated type, is of itself a masterpiece, not only for the beauty of the torso, the individuality of the limbs, and the perfection of every form—severely studied even to their finest extremities, and firm as the muscles of the Laocoon—but also because the face demonstrates a fierce pride of which antiquity itself has shown few examples, except in the figures of Ajax. David, in this picture, seems to have added to the antique the passionate sentiment of Polydorus of Caravaggio. Some parts of the picture of 'The Sabines'—the children, for example, especially those who, with their hands on the ground, seem to smile at the spectator—are admirably executed. The eyes seem to shine, and the very carnation has life in it. As for the horses, they have not the antique character so desirable in this style; they are not painted correctly from nature. At the time when David painted 'The Sabines,' it is true the horses of Phidias were unknown. It was many years after, that the fragments of the Parthenon were taken to England by Lord Elgin, and multiplied all over France by copies."

The eminent critic might have added that Romulus and Tattius are very fanciful sketches, as far as costume are concerned. David preferred showing his power over the human figure, his admirable capacity for delineating sinew, muscle, and limb to correctness. A hero, who could display such a helmet, javelin, and buckler as those of Romulus, would not have been wholly denuded. Many other incongruities might be pointed out. The fact is, that David was not quite so great as many of his countrymen have tried to make him out to be. He was an earnest and studious lover of art, who did some very great things, but who never produced one of those mighty and suggestive masterpieces which have immortalised Michael Angelo and Raffaele.

In 1795, David proposed to M. Rousselin de St. Albin, a friend of Danton's, to paint him a portrait of the famous tribune. He traced the portrait from memory, assisted by a very feebly executed marble bust. This drawing is of inestimable value. It is dashed off boldly, with extreme fire and energy. Some pencil dashes, executed with extreme freedom, some vigorous cuts, have sufficed to place before us the revolutionary genius, in his crushed mask, half lion, half bull-dog, sublime in its ugliness. When he had finished it, David examined it for some time, and offering it to St. Albin, said: "Take that; I give you Jupiter Olympus." These words were not without meaning from a man who wished to efface all idea of participation in the death of Danton. The gallery of Messieurs St. Albin, which we visited many times a few years ago, contains the most valuable memorials of the revolution; and M. de Lamartine derived much information for his late eloquent works from that unique collection, which, if still in existence, can by their politeness be always visited. David had many features in his political life, which the art-historian can scarcely wish to touch upon. But we cannot forbear comparing the David, who was the devoted friend of Robespierre and St. Just, with the same man denying his fallen friends, and spurning his former rôle, to accept the title of first painter to the emperor—he had been first painter to Louis XVI.—induced, doubtless, by the thought of figuring in history as another Apelles to another Alexander. Young Robespierre asking to die with his brother—young Robespierre, to whom Napoleon owed so much of his promotion—presents a more noble spectacle than the fickle and versatile artist. But though David went as far as the most extreme men of the Mountain, Marat excepted, his artistic reputation saved him from the unmitigated obloquy lavished on the men of the revolution.

Napoleon ordered him to paint, for the sum of 180,000 francs, the two pictures, "The Distribution of the Eagles" and "The Coronation," which are to be found at every stall in France. They are gigantic compositions. The first is

monotonous, and inevitably so, from the crush of uniforms, which has in reality overwhelmed the beautiful and the true. In those days all, even art, bent beneath the sword. The style is inflated, and the perspective bad. "The Coronation" is more successful. It is wisely and nobly grouped. It contains about one hundred and fifty portraits, painted conscientiously and striking in likeness, especially those of Talleyrand, Bernadotte, and Cambacères, who stand in the foreground. The moment chosen by the painter is that when the emperor, having crowned himself with his own hands, is about to place the crown on the head of Josephine. The head of Napoleon is radiant, and the simplicity of the lines adds to the grandeur of the figure. As usual with all painters after Napoleon was emperor, David idealises the man. The group of priests is very excellent; there are some heads in the number, which seem to live and speak. The silk, the velvet, the ermine, all the stuffs, all the costumes, are admirably rendered; but the whole is cold; we seem to want more noise, more animation, more crowds, a long nave full of people,—less etiquette, in fact, and some other background, instead of those marble pillars which check the vision. David, who thoroughly comprehended the tone which suited each particular object, did not comprehend those great combinations of colour with light, which, by learned gradations of tone, arrive at magnificence and grandeur. In his ordinary style he had represented Pope Pius VII. with his hands on his knees, a useless actor, looking on at the imitator of Charlemagne. But the emperor ordered him to raise the powerless hands in sign of benediction. "I did not bring him from so far," said he, "to do nothing."

"The Portrait of Pius VII.," by David (p. 336), has been very highly lauded. There is certainly a great power of modelling in it. The simplicity of the execution is great, and nature is reproduced with great fidelity, while the style is correct and firm. The hands are treated with the feeling of a Philippe de Champagne, and yet with more *naïveté*. This is held, however, to be nothing but a little bit of Dutch imitation: the painter has added nothing of his own: if there be thought in the head, it is because of the original. There is none of the idealism of the great painter. David has done nothing but copy marked features—features which present a mixture of roughness and elevation of character—the Italian's look, and the movement of his black eyebrows. It is really a fine thing, admirably executed; but the beauty of the model, his expression, his rank, his renown, produced this of themselves. David, with the Pope before him, was what he always was—a first-rate artist, an incomparable master of graphic science and the art of modelling; but this reality is a little naked, without ideal, without interpretation, and the study of form appears to have absorbed everything. If we examine the portrait of the same Pius VII., by Lawrence, we find it full of poetry and grandeur: the head beams with animation, it shines with intelligence, and there is a lightning flash in the glance. Genius shines in the eyes of the sovereign pontiff through the plebeian envelope; the weight of the chin, the thick form of the mouth, are compensated by the delicacy, beauty, and dazzling brilliancy of the eye. Instead of the Pope of David, sitting tranquilly near a wall, nothing indicating his sovereignty except the Roman purple, Lawrence has given us a prince of the Church surrounded by splendours and amidst the wonders of the Vatican. If his face is uneasy, if his eyes flash, if his whole person is in motion, if his whole physiognomy flags, it is to remind us of the wandering and uneasy existence of the celebrated prelate.

David never was more poetical, never more successful, than in his celebrated picture of "Napoleon crossing Mount St. Bernard" (p. 337). One can gaze with pleasure on this robust horse, which seems to tremble beneath the weight of his illustrious rider, and one examines, with a curious eye, this beardless general crossing the rocks where are engraved the names of Hannibal and Charlemagne, while the breath of fortune sends the folds of his mantle waving to the summits of the Alps. This is a great picture.

The day the allies entered Paris, David finished his "Leonidas." The picture of "Thermopylæ" dates from

the terrible invasion, the end of that bold bad man's ambition. The idea of the picture is happy, and the isolation of the hero Leonidas is good. He has just spoken familiarly with his soldiers, and promised them that they shall sup with Pluto. He is now mute, pensive, his mind is far away in the abode of the gods. The whole, the full sublimity of his sacrifice appears to him, and makes him radiant with solemn delight. As he was the soul of the troop, David has made him the centre of the picture. Around him all is in motion, all agitated; every one prepares; the trumpets sound the hour of death; a last crown is offered to Venus; and, to add to the emotion, a sketch of real life is introduced, in the persons of the slaves bearing burdens, and of mules carrying the baggage of the army. The execution of this picture, confided almost wholly to M. Rouget, one of the ablest practitioners of the school, is carefully soft and somewhat coquettish, too much so for the subject. These faults, however, escaped the masses, and the impression made by the picture was immense.

In 1816, David expatriated himself and went to Brussels. A law of amnesty condemned him to exile. He was lucky to escape the horrible massacres, equal in bloodiness to those of the Terror, which followed the Restoration. David was more consistent now than in earlier days. He would neither ask pardon nor yield to the earnest request of M. de Humboldt, who offered him, in the name of the King of Prussia, the title of minister of arts at Berlin. The brother of the king himself visited the painter, and wished to take him away in his carriage. "You will paint us," he said, "as you have painted that general," pointing to the magnificent portrait of the Marshal Gerard. The old quondam republican this time persisted in his refusal.

He lived ten years at Brussels, honoured by every one, loaded with favours by the king of the Low Countries and the Prince of Orange, adored by his new pupils, for he stuck to his art to the day of his death. As he was about to die, the consistent old heathen asked for the engraving of "Leonidas." He had it placed before him, looked for some time at it and said, "I am the only man who could have succeeded in conceiving and executing that head." These were his last words. He died on the 29th December, 1825.

The Restoration showed all its petty and mean pitilessness towards David; it carried its revenge even beyond the grave by a refinement of cruelty scarcely to be credited. Despite the earnest supplications of his family, of his friends, of so many illustrious pupils—despite all those speaking witnesses to his fame which dotted the Louvre, the government would neither pardon him alive, nor allow his body to return after death. His coffin was stopped at the frontier with a savage barbarity which raised a cry of indignation over all Europe. The liberal party in France made good use of the circumstance, and Beranger wrote upon the subject one of the most terrible of his songs.

David was great in drawing and in style, as Rubens was great in colour and fancy. If we wished to deny David wholly, we must deny the whole French school; the distinctive characteristic of which is to excel rather in substance than in form. David had nothing original about him as far as the execution is concerned; sometimes he is led away by the touch of Valentine; sometimes he falls into the porcelain and labourably polished style of Van der Werf; sometimes he takes up the line of Dominichino, whose timid and grayish tones he adopts without warmth and without earnestness. Then, when he grew old and lived in Flanders, he allowed himself to be won by colour: he loved to unite Raffaele and Rubens, and ended by producing his "Mars and Venus."

The great merit of David is the thought, the conception. No French artist has ever had a higher idea of painting, though applying his art to the things of this world, and making the world his all in all. And yet, when we recollect how David was mixed up with the terrible and mighty deeds of the Convention, we wonder at his coldness. One would expect a striking evidence of fiery emotion, dashing colours—and we find tranquil forms, beauties correct as a statue, but as cold; imposing historical personages; motionless as marble. We

seek the burning conception of the revolutionist—we find ourselves examining the productions of a solemn legislator.

The fact is, David wanted the vivifying influence of some spiritual faith. He was a mere materialist. Having no belief in Christianity, man became to him a machine with limbs and muscles. Hence his cold and stiff character; hence the want of mind, of soul, in his pictures. The inner man speaks not to us through the eyes: woman is, on his canvas, a mere beautiful animal, beautifully painted. There is no ideality, no poetry, no connecting link between the mere human frame and the speaking, living, thinking thing within. His best picture is "The Death of Socrates;" and here the head we admire is that of the philosopher, whose countenance is lit up as he expounds his theory of the immortality of the soul. David, imbued with the warm and elevating sympathies and the ennobling faith of Christ, would not have been the artist he was; he would have been truly great. His materialism stunted his conceptions and dwarfed his mind.

David had unbounded influence over his pupils. When he entered the workshop every one was silent, and none took the liberty to joke, so much were they impressed by his presence. It is true he was jovial and even familiar in his language, despite his dignity of manner; but his lofty stature, his imposing bearing, his look, and perhaps the remembrance of the terrible part that had been played by the ex-Conventionist, all this intimidated. His face would have been handsome, had its left side not been disfigured by an accident, which had swelled the cheek, and imparted a sidelong expression to the lip, which made him always look harsh and sneering. Though this deformity interfered with his pronunciation, he expressed himself neatly and with precision, like a man who had always moved in enlightened circles. He neither taught his pupils colour nor the manual process, which he disdained. His lessons were confined to teaching the great principles of art, to style, to the study of the antique combined with that of the natural model, and to perspective, which it was necessary, he said, not only to know, but to feel.

Two things will preserve the remembrance of David—his school, and his works. His pictures are certainly his best works. Gros, Girodet, and Gerard, are worth more than the Sabines. The enormous influence he exercised over the character of his era, and that era one of such greatness, will be his first title to glory. This influence was continental, and it transformed and changed nearly every school in Europe. David persuaded the Flemish artists that it was necessary to draw. He it was who persuaded the painters of Rome that pagan art was better than catholic art. In France he did good; he brought back art to something like a serious position; he organised magnificent *fêtes*; he brought about a revolution in costume, furniture, ornaments, and decorations. He was the absolute master of the arts.

And, moreover, alongside of that beauty which owes its success to contemporary ideas, there is another, independent of circumstances and fashion, an absolute beauty which is of all countries and of all time. This is to be found in David, when, in presence of the dead body of Lepelletier or of the bath of Marat, he forgot the lessons and teachings of systems to attack frankly nature herself. The painter then will live as long as the chief of the school; and should posterity forget the influence of David, to think only of his personal works, there will still remain in the minds of his countrymen a passionate image, like the "Oath of the Tennis-Court," or a calm, imposing, and sublime idea, like the "Death of Socrates."

A catalogue of the works of David would be very difficult to give; there are, however, certain of his pictures which should be recorded.

1772. "Combat of Minerva against Mars aided by Venus." The second prize of Rome.

1775. "The Loves of Antiochus and Stratonica." This picture fetched a high price, and is now in the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

Then he painted the roof and the wainscot of the salon of Mademoiselle Guimard (the Temple of Terpsichore), Rue du Mont Blanc (Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin), Paris.



Exhibition of 1787. "Belisarius."

"Saint Roch interceding with the Virgin for the Cure of those stricken with the Plague." This picture is at Marseilles, in the Quarantine.

"Portrait of M. Potoki on horseback."

Exhibition of 1783. "The Grief of Andromache." This was the picture which gained him an entrance into the Academy.

Portraits of M. Desmaisons, uncle of David; of Madame Pecoul; of M. Leroy, doctor; of M. the Count de Clermont d'Amboise; of M. Joubert.

Exhibition of 1786. "Oath of the Horatii;" painted at Rome for the king, in 1784.

"Belisarius," reduced.

"Portrait of M. P——."

"The Oath of the Tennis-Court." His best picture; finished by M. Coupin.

1793. "The Last Moments of Lepelletier de Saint Fargeau." This *tableau* was exhibited in the hall occupied by the Convention.

Portrait of Mademoiselle Lepelletier, and of a daughter of the French nation.

"Marat assassinated in his Bath;" a half-figure, size of nature. This picture was exhibited to public view in 1846, in the Bazaar Bonne Nouvelle.

Portraits of Bailly, Gregoire, de Prieur, of Robespierre, of St. Just, of Jean Bon Saint André, of Marie Joseph Chenier, of Boissy d'Anglas. These are in the gallery of the Count de Saint Albin.



BELISARIUS.—FROM A PAINTING BY DAVID.

Exhibition of 1787. "Death of Socrates;" belonging to M. Trudaine.

A reduced copy of "The Horatii," nearly wholly from the hand of Girodet; belonging to M. Firmin Didot.

Exhibition of 1789. "J. Brutus, First Consul, having just witnessed the execution of his two sons, executed by his orders." The lictors are taking away the bodies.

"The Loves of Paris and Helen."

Portraits of Monsieur and Madame Lavoisier, of M. Thelasson de Sorcy, of Madame de Sorcy, of Madame d'Orvilliers, of Madame de Brehan, of Monsieur and Madame Vassal, of Madame Lecoulteux, and Madame Hocquart.

"Louis XVI. entering the Constituent Assembly." This picture is lost.

"The Death of young Barra."

Exhibition of the year IV. (1795.) "Portrait of a Woman and a Child."

1799. "Sappho and Phaon." Now in Russia.

"Romulus."

1800. "An Equestrian Portrait of the First Consul Crossing the St. Bernard." There are five copies of this celebrated picture.

Portraits of Madame Verninac, of Madame Pastoret, of Madame Trudaine, of Madame Recamier, of Blau and Meyer, of M. Pennerin Villandois.

1804. "Pope Pius VII. and Cardinal Caprara."

1805. "Portrait of Pius VII."

1808. "The Coronation."

"The Sabines."



"A full-length Portrait of the Emperor." This belongs to the King of Westphalia.

Exhibition of 1810. "The Oath of the Army at the Distribution of the Eagles."

"The Emperor standing in his Cabinet." This portrait was painted for the Marquis of Douglas.

When it was nearly finished, the emperor came in suddenly to the *atelier* of the artist, who had hitherto concealed it from him. He saw this picture at a glance.

"Admirable!" he cried. "I must have that, David."

"Sire, I am sorry; but it is sold—it is an order."

"Paint another; I must have this."

"I am sorry, sire, but *this* painting is sold," replied David, respectfully but firmly.

"Who has bought it?" asked Napoleon, on whose brow the imperial frown was collecting.

"The Marquis of Douglas—"

1816. "Love quitting Psyche early in the Morning."

"Telemachus and Eucharis."

"The Coronation," another picture; sold first for £3,000, then for £80.

"The Anger of Achilles." "An old Gipsy telling fortunes."

1824. "Mars disarmed by Venus." This picture was exhibited for the benefit of the old men's hospital at Brussels, and then in Paris for the benefit of the author, to whom it brought no less than 45,000 francs.

Our views relative to French Art are, to a certain extent, supported by the author of a book which has appeared since the above was written. "The Purple Tints of Paris" \* thus describes Art in France:—"One of the distinctive characteristics of the French nation is its love of Art. No one can deny that it possesses this in an eminent degree, though, from want of proper calculation, the practical results are not com-



THE DEATH OF SOCRATES.—FROM A PAINTING BY DAVID.

"What! an Englishman carry off this prize—the best you have ever painted of me? No! It cannot be."

"Sire, I have sold it."

Napoleon, who was extremely passionate, and whose passion sometimes made him do little things, raised his foot in an instant of ungovernable rage, and put it through the canvas. He then walked away, leaving the amazed artist to gaze at the ruin of his admirable painting.

Next morning David was sent for to join the emperor's breakfast-table. Not a word was said on the subject of the previous day's discussion; but the manner of the emperor was so gentle, and he took the hand of the artist with so much affection, that David clearly understood that the man apologised, though the crowned head was too proud to allow it.

The picture was re-painted, and is, we believe, still in the possession of the Marquis of Douglas.

1814. "Thermopylæ," size of nature.

mensurate with the strength of the passion—at least, in the higher departments. The Frenchwoman, when she chooses the colour of her dress, and arranges its graceful folds, is an artist—quite as much as the cook or the historical painter. The *ouvrier*, when he creates a table, a work-box, a vase, a watch, or a brooch, is pre-eminently an artist. Even the lad who displays shawls and muslins in a shop-window has the artistic feeling. It is not surprising, therefore, that the number of persons who apply themselves to drawing, and painting, and sculpture, is immense. In Paris alone there are rather more than six thousand artists, in our sense of the word, of whom one half are amateurs, and the other half gain, or endeavour to gain, a living by their profession. Almost the whole of them have spent several years in the *atelier* or studio of a master, and have acquired a certain *esprit de corps*, and a peculiar way of viewing things. The great majority

\* "Purple Tints of Paris." By Bayle St. John

are republicans, more or less fanatical—though some of the most successful gentlemen now affect aristocratic ideas.

"I have hinted that French love of art, in as far as it has to do with patronage, is by no means enlightened. To prove this would take me into a special discussion, and necessitate invidious remarks. I could give instances innumerable to prove that the small class of persons who buy pictures are directed in their choice more by accident than by science, and that the public willingly admires when it is told to admire. The history of the reputation of Prud'hon, now so popular, is a case in point. During his life-time he was only appreciated by a few friends, connoisseurs, but uninfluential; and it was only twenty years after his death that he began to be talked of. At present, pictures which would scarcely be sold at all in his life, now fetch thousands of francs, and there is a disposition to overrate him. I know an instance in which an amateur,

bewitched, and away it goes, like a pack of hounds after puss, until some other game crosses the track, when it turns aside and leaves the first victim of its enthusiasm astonished, and no doubt rather grieved, at its safety.

"It was not till about the time of the Fronde, that the young nobility of France, sent abroad by their families to travel out of the way of civil dissensions, acquired and brought home a real admiration for art. Some fifty gentlemen, with means and leisure at their disposal, began then to praise and buy pictures, and encourage genius to do its best. Then taste was, perhaps, never very refined. At any rate it rapidly deteriorated. Yet, up to the revolution, there was a constant, and, to a certain extent, enlightened patronage of art. A little previously, the wealthy *bourgeoisie*, more from imitation than any other cause, had begun to purchase pictures, and try to understand their beauties. Probably, had things remained

*De Rome le 28 Avril 1785*

*A faut que j'écrive Monsieur le Marquis de  
Lucès m'attendu de mon Tableau venant la première  
le peuple Romain à d'accorder que que mérite a un peintre  
Francois mais cette fois cy ils nous rendent bon  
c'est et il ya un bon coin de monde a mon tableau  
pres que autant nombreux que la comédie du Seduction  
quel plaisir ce seroit pour vous qui m'aimez d'en  
être témoin au moins j'étois sûr en faire la dis-  
-tinction. ....*

*Monsieur le Marquis*

*aux Comptes de peinture a M. de Lafal*

*Robertson Lumb  
M. de Lafal  
Paris*

who spoke with contempt of a now well-known painter, was rebuked severely by a critic, and was possessed, six months afterwards, of pieces by that very hand to the value of eight hundred pounds. A more singular case of the same kind would require the mention of individuals now living; but perhaps this sort of thing is sufficiently common all the world over to enable the reader to understand what must be its manifestations where it exists in an excessive degree.

"I compare the growth of a reputation, artistic or literary, in France, to the progress of the Giaour in 'Vathek,' who, after he has been kicked from the steps of the throne, rolls himself into a ball, and by some unaccountable attraction draws after him the deadly-eyed prince, Carathis, the war minister, the courtiers, the people—even the halt and the infirm. By some accident, one or two amateurs become convinced, with or without reason, that a man has genius, and begin running after him. Very soon the whole country is

quiet, the education of their taste would have been successful; but time was not allowed them, and they were left heirs of a fashion instead of a science. They, as well as the people at large, had an intuitive veneration of art—though more as a name than as a thing. It was their impression that art was a great and beautiful manifestation of the mind, and they endeavoured, with less success than might have been wished, to appreciate its productions. France, therefore, possesses a wealthy middle class, really disposed to hail and reward the genuine artist, but without the power of recognising him when he appears. This accounts for so many sudden and ephemeral reputations. The *bourgeoisie* are conscientiously on the look-out for great men, and are easily deceived into supposing they have found them. Under such circumstances, we need not wonder that intrigue and quackery are almost necessary to whomsoever desires to succeed.

"Among themselves the artists affect, above all things, to

despise the *bourgeois* feeling, and those who truckle to it. One of their number is excommunicated because he did not insult a grocer who exclaimed, "Your picture is a masterpiece; but I cannot buy it, for it is six inches too wide." Another is accused of selling for two hundred francs what he had previously asked a thousand for. In truth, however, all the really professional men are obliged to be tolerably condescending to the ignorance and indelicacy with which they have to deal, and revenge themselves when alone by pasquinade and satire."

This is a very correct representation of the state of affairs in Paris. As we are on the subject of modern art, a few more extracts may be interesting. The same writer says: "Many young French painters affect an originality in their manner which they have not in their mind. Would-be men of genius are nearly always lazy. They think this one of the most valuable privileges of their character. My friend Basil belonged to this class, except, perhaps, that he had more talent than the world gave him credit for. He lost himself by yielding, to a most ridiculous extent, to that absurd habit of some intellectual men of 'wanting inspiration.' They wait for inspiration sometimes all their lives, and it never comes. The real way is to go and fetch it. Basil did not choose to do so. On one occasion a friend procured him, partly out of charity, an order from the wife of a wealthy banker for a kind of thing in which he excelled—a couple of bouquets in water colours. The money was paid in advance three years ago, and the bouquets are not yet in bloom. He does not intend to defraud her, but 'he wants to produce something excellent.' He is waiting for inspiration. His friends tell him that this seems dishonest. He colours, bites his lip, and says, 'I will set about it,' in a deplorably desponding tone; but he has not put pencil to paper yet. He has no studio of his own, but goes now to one friend's place, now to the other—sometimes with, sometimes without, materials; but upon almost every occasion he thrusts his hands into his shock of hair, and sits down complaining that he has no ideas, no inspiration. As may be imagined, he is often in want of a dinner, and is compelled to sponge upon a friend. He went to one the other day, and in his heavy, lumbering way, said, 'I have got no money, and yet I must eat.'"

David is the original of all these students. He it was gave the tone to the *ateliers*; it was he made the artist a republican, an eccentric individual, with a broad-brimmed hat and moustaches. It was in his workshop that first appeared the Loustic and the Rapin, thus described:—"The Loustic is generally an artist-amateur, that is to say, his parents have property; they see him some day, when a child, take a piece of chalk or charcoal, and scratch the portrait of his father or his schoolmaster. This is enough. It is at once determined that a great genius has revealed itself. The lad no sooner escapes from college than he is sent to a painter's studio. He is supplied with a handsome sum of money, and becomes very often the Loustic of the *atelier*; perhaps the most backward in the serious of his art, but clever as a caricaturist, and allowed to take any liberties as a practical joker.

"The Rapin is the servant of the *atelier*, something equivalent to a fag at a public school. A shabby dress is a necessary part of his definition. Most probably he has an immense bush of hair. He often becomes a clever artist, but no one knows him. His duties are to do all the work of the *atelier*; to run of errands, to set the model, &c. He often picks up a good deal of knowledge from the conversation of the students, and repeats it in a mysterious manner."

Such are some of the types found in a French *atelier* of painting—the *ateliers* of the descendants of the great master Louis David.

### JOHN MARTIN.

If this remarkable English painter did not receive during his life all his due, it appears likely that now at last, when death has closed upon him, he will be granted the honours of renown and fame in full measure. But even during life John

Martin was admired and popular with a very extensive portion of the community. There was a grandeur, a magnificence about some of his paintings—his "Belshazzar's Feast," his "Crucifixion," and his "Pandemonium"—which struck the eye at once, and caused him to be appreciated. Vast conceptions in architecture have their weight in the eyes of the millions, and his were truly vast. His "Joshua commanding the Sun to stand still" is known everywhere. It has carried his reputation into all quarters, over the whole of continental Europe as well as this island.

And he is dead at last, having at length followed those great contemporaries of his, who divided with him public favour and applause. Those, who knew something of him in those days when his drawing-room was the place where men of all kinds, authors, artists, singers, and public favourites in every style, were wont to meet, regret his death much, though aware that for some time past he had been lost to art. It is the more to be regretted, because he has left several admirable pictures unfinished. This had been discovered for some time past, and had caused him to retire to the Isle of Man, where he died a few weeks back.

John Martin was born at Cayden Bridge, near Hexham, Northumberland, on the 19th of July, 1789, and having in his early youth shown a very marked liking for the limner's art, his parents determined on sending him to a coach-builder at Norwich, there to learn the glorious art of heraldic painting. But this did not suit Martin; it was not at all what he aimed at. His ambition was above this; and disgusted and irritated at the drudgery imposed upon him in the coach-builder's employment, he threw up his apprenticeship. He now received some instructions in drawing of a different kind from one Muss, father of a very well-known enamel-painter of the same name, which had been changed from Masso under the impression that to succeed one must have a thorough English name. With these riches, and no other, John Martin started for London in search of fortune.

There have been so many stories told of what poor artists and poor authors have suffered in the upward struggle for fame and competence—for they are never insane enough to dream of wealth—that the reader will not require any minute details on this subject. Whether he dined on a penny loaf, or added to that solid luxury an ounce of beef, or, like the Paris artists out of luck, walked the streets without a dinner, and talked of the fine joint he had dined on, are things we scarcely care to know. Suffice it to say, he steeled himself in the fiery cauldron of genius—poverty, and came from it energetic, vigorous, ready and able to do battle with the world.

He began to gain a living by painting on glass and china, by making water-colour drawings, and also by the thankless task of teaching. But this was the outward and positive life; there was the ideal life too going on. He had already determined in his own mind to be a great artist, and it was at this period that he painted pictures on towels instead of canvas, for want of the more artistic preparation. The long hours of the night, that should have been spent in sleep, were devoted to earnest study, and especially to a deep elaboration of the principles of architecture and perspective—two elements he has used admirably in all his productions.

At last, eager for the fray, he began the battle of life, and came boldly before the world. In the year 1810, having, like most men of any note or success in any walk demanding study and reflection, married early, he painted his oil picture of "Clytie" for the Royal Academy Exhibition of that year. It was, like the first picture of David, in whose life there are points of resemblance with Martin, rejected at first, and then at the opening of the following season accepted, tolerably well hung, and very highly appreciated by good judges. In 1812 his fancy and imagination, those great illuminators of his genius, were very forcibly shown in the production of "Sadak in search of the Waters of Oblivion." This was a genuine development of his peculiar characteristics. "Joshua commanding the Sun to stand still" was a very successful picture, and gained him the £100 medal of the British Institution. In 1819 he became more grand and sublime in his "Fall of Babylon,"